

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Council 7 April 2008
AUTHOR/S: Corporate Manager (Planning & Sustainable Communities)

NORTH WEST CAMBRIDGE AREA ACTION PLAN: RESPONSES TO THE PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION AND THE DRAFT AREA ACTION PLAN FOR SUBMISSION

Purpose

1. To agree the responses to representations received to the NW Cambridge Area Action Plan Preferred Options consultation, and the Draft Area Action Plan and supporting documentation for submission to the Secretary of State.

Executive Summary

2. The Area Action Plan (AAP) for North West Cambridge is being prepared jointly by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council and identifies land to be released from the Cambridge Green Belt in order to contribute towards meeting the development needs of Cambridge University. It also identifies land to be returned to the Cambridge Green Belt to the North of Madingley Road and to provide green separation between Cambridge and Girton. It establishes an overall vision and objectives to achieve this and sets out policies and proposals to guide the development as a whole.
3. This report presents for consideration, the representations and responses to the Preferred Options Report together with the draft Area Action Plan for Submission to the Secretary of State and other supporting documentation.

Background

4. Cambridge University has identified this area, which is in its ownership, as its only option to address its long term development needs. As a result, the Structure Plan and the Cambridge Local Plan have recognised that North West Cambridge should be developed for predominantly University related uses but that development should only take place when the University has demonstrated that a development is needed and cannot be accommodated on land elsewhere.
5. In order to guide this development, work on the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan started with the Issues and Options Report which was subject to public consultation from 25 September to 6 November 2006. Following this, the responses to the Issues & Options consultation and preferred approach to the draft AAP were considered by the Joint Member Reference Group (JMRG) on 29 June 2007, the City Council's Environment Scrutiny Committee on 10 July 2007 and South Cambridgeshire's Council on 17 July 2007. The

Preferred Options Report (draft AAP) was then considered by the JMRG on 10 September 2007, the City Council's Environment Scrutiny Committee on 25 September 2007 and South Cambridgeshire's Cabinet on 27 September 2007.

6. The Preferred Options Report was the subject of extensive public consultation from 22 October to 3 December 2007 and was set out in two volumes for clarity. Volume 1 took the form of a draft AAP whilst Volume 2 recorded how each Preferred Option was chosen. The Preferred Options Report was sent to a wide range of consultees, including local organisations and interest groups as well as statutory consultees and the general public and a series of public exhibitions were held. Representations were invited, to either support or object to the policies set out in the draft plan (volume 1) and the Sustainability Appraisal was also made available for comment and reference.
7. In addition, the following supporting documents were made available for information:
 - North West Cambridge Transport Study prepared by WS Atkins for Cambridgeshire County Council;
 - Junction Access Study on Huntingdon Road prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council;
 - Site Footprint Assessment prepared by Cambridge City Council and SCDC; and
 - Green Belt Landscape Assessment Report prepared by David Brown Landscape Associates and Richard Moorish Associates.

The Results of Preferred Options Consultation and Submission Draft AAP

8. There was a good level of response to the Preferred Options consultation with 590 representations being received. Of those, 460 were registered as objections and 130 were registered as supports. Good use was made of the interactive website with 80% of representations made online.
9. The main issues arising from the consultation are set out below:
 1. Site & Setting:
 - Objections from local residents that the Preferred Option is too limited and would result in over-development with higher densities which would adversely impact on residential amenity and the Ascension Parish Burial Ground; support therefore for the University's site footprint set out in Option 10.1.
 - Lower densities and building heights with more green open spaces needed on edges of the development where it abuts existing properties.
 - The site footprint is insufficient to meet the needs set out in other policies within the AAP or the future needs of the University, and would result in a poor and inefficient development configuration; the developable area identified is inadequate for 2,500 homes and

student housing, research & development buildings and neighbourhood facilities.

- Support for the Strategic Gap but confusion over its purpose.

2. Housing:

- Two storey houses should be provided adjacent to the site edges with 30 metre long gardens to provide wildlife sanctuaries and to respect local character and residential amenity.
- Inclusion of words 'at least 50% affordable housing' is unsound and not supported by the evidence.
- Concerns regarding affordable housing distribution in small groups or clusters and to local student housing in a separate and distinct quarter.

3. Employment:

- The split between academic uses and research is arbitrary, greater flexibility should be allowed in order to take full advantage of opportunities when they arise.

4. Transport:

- The link road will primarily be for access to the site but it will also offer an alternative access to the strategic road network.
- A road will only be possible if impacts on amenities including green gap and the historic environment are acceptable.
- The design of new roads should give priority to public transport, pedestrians and cyclists.
- Madingley Rise could provide access to development to the east of the site and will help to distribute traffic evenly to the local road network (through the University Observatories site on Madingley Road).

5. Community Facilities

- No reference to need for health care facilities.
- 1% contribution to public art should be a target, not a minimum requirement as this could have significant impact on viability.

6. Natural Resources

- Levels are far from a high degree of sustainability. Code level 5 should be the absolute minimum for residential.
- An approach that delivers Code level 4 up to 2016 and Code level 6 beyond 2016 would provide a more realistic delivery path.
- There is a need for greater clarity and certainty in the proposed approach, particularly clarification of the relationship between Policy Options NW24 and NW29.
- Policies should reflect recent development in strategic management of water resources and the Catchment Wide Studies now being developed by the Environment Agency.
- Recent survey work on the 350m culvert carrying the Award Drain beneath the B1049 in Histon and Impington has amplified grave concerns over flood risk and structural soundness.

7. Delivery

- Construction waste must not be placed in mounds or beams near the boundary where it will diminish the amenity of neighbouring houses or in such a way as to create surface water or sub surface runoff from the site.
- The University has already demonstrated its needs case for residential housing provision and student housing.

10. Officers from both Councils have summarised all representations received and prepared responses as set out in Appendix 1. Appendix 1 provides a summary of each representation in plan order, together with the recommended response and, where appropriate, a proposed change to the draft AAP. Appendix 2 sets out the representations and responses to the Sustainability Appraisal.

11. A late representation was submitted by Willingham Parish Council on 12 December 2007 and raised two points. This has not been registered, but Members are advised that the response would be as follows:

- The need for adequate infrastructure to prevent the knock on effect of additional traffic passing through nearby village.

Response – Policy NW12 in the AAP states that the development will contribute to measures to mitigate any significant adverse traffic impacts on M11, A14 and the surrounding highway network, if it is shown to be necessary by transport assessments.

- The risk of setting a precedent in restricting affordable housing to University employees

Response – land is released from the Green Belt and allocated for development in this location specifically to address the needs of Cambridge University and it is therefore appropriate that the affordable housing should provide for University staff. This policy approach is unique to this site and it will not set a precedent for other sites.

12. A schedule of all proposed changes to the AAP (in Plan order) is set out in Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 consists of a track changes version of the submission draft AAP showing those changes. The most significant proposed change to the AAP is that of the site footprint. Prior to the North West Cambridge Joint Member Reference Group (JMRG) meeting on 17th March 2008, officers circulated a supplementary report on the site footprint which provided a final “health check” on the site boundary before submission testing it against the AAP objectives. This proposed relatively modest amendments to the site footprint boundary in South Cambridgeshire, which increase the site area but retain a green foreground setting to Cambridge provided by the slope of land rising from the Washpit Brook. A copy of this supporting documentation is attached in Appendix 5 for information. It essentially

proposes that the developable area increases by around 3.9 hectares, taking the total developable site area to approximately 73 hectares and the total housing capacity to 2325 dwellings which remains within the range sought by the University. A Land Budget paper has been prepared as a supporting document to the AAP and is attached for information in Appendix 6.

13. In addition to the above supporting documentation, a Climate Change and Sustainable Design and Construction paper (attached as Appendix 7) has also been produced in order to provide an evidence base for Policy NW24: Climate Change & Sustainable Design & Construction.
14. The submission draft AAP has been subject to a Final Sustainability Appraisal which is a statutory requirement. The Sustainability Appraisal incorporates a Strategic Environmental Assessment as required by European legislation and has been carried out by Scott Wilson to enable an independent assessment to be made of emerging policies. The Final Sustainability Report is attached as Appendix 8 and the consultants did not identify any significant issues.
15. In accordance with Article 6(3) of the European Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora, a Habitats Regulations Assessment (Appropriate Assessment) is required for all local development documents in order to assess the potential effects of a proposed plan or project both alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on one or more Natura 2000 or Ramsar sites. In order to meet the requirements of Article 6(3), a Screening Assessment consultation was carried out with Natural England, who are the statutory nature conservation body for Appropriate Assessment. Natural England supported the Screening Assessment's conclusion that policies in the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan Preferred Options Report were unlikely to have significant impacts upon the European Sites located within and in the vicinity of South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City, and that an Appropriate Assessment is therefore not required for this document. It is considered that none of the changes proposed in the Submission Draft AAP affect this conclusion. A copy of the Screening Assessment is attached for information in Appendix 9.

North West Cambridge Joint Member Reference Group (JMRG)

16. The JMRG met on Monday 17 March 2008 to discuss the responses to the Preferred Options consultation and the draft AAP for Submission. At the meeting a couple of minor changes to the transport responses were endorsed in order to clarify the current position with TIF as well as requesting that a definition of Green Infrastructure is provided in the glossary of the AAP. Members also agreed all the proposed changes to the draft AAP for submission including the site footprint amendments.

Relationship with the Cambridge Local Plan

17. The following policies and proposals in the 2006 Cambridge Local Plan will be superseded when the AAP is adopted:

Policy 9/7 – Land between Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road;
 Proposals Site 9.07 – Madingley Road/Huntingdon Road; and
 Proposals Site 9.11 – 19 Acre Field and Land at Gravel Hill Farm.

Next Steps

18. The programme for preparing the North West Cambridge AAP is intended to enable development to come forward as soon as possible to address the needs of the University including affordable housing for its own staff. Once formally agreed by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, the Area Action Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State on 19 May 2008. In accordance with statutory regulations and the adopted City Council Statement of Community Involvement, a six-week public consultation period will start on 19 May and finish on 30 June 2008.

19. A publicity leaflet will be distributed in the vicinity of the development area and there will be a small number of public consultation exhibitions. The AAP and the following supporting documentation will be available for inspection at the main offices of both Councils and on-line:
 - North West Cambridge Final Sustainability Appraisal Report (2008)
 - Habitats Regulation Assessment (2007)
 - North West Cambridge Green Belt and Landscape Study (2006)
 - Site Footprint Assessment (2007)
 - Site Footprint Supplementary Paper (March 2008)
 - Land Budget Paper (2008)
 - North West Cambridge Transport Study (2007)
 - Junction Access Study onto Huntingdon Road (2007)
 - Climate Change & Sustainable Design & Construction Paper (2008)
 - Statement of Consultation & Self Assessment of Soundness (2008) – attached as Appendix 10 for information

20. Following Submission to the Secretary of State in May 2008, it is anticipated that a public examination will be held in November/December 2008 with a view to a binding Inspector’s Report being received in May 2009.

Options

21. The Submission AAP policies have been derived from some 45 different Options published for public participation in the Issues and Options Report and the Preferred Options which have been subject to public consultation. The Submission AAP policies take into account the responses to the public participation, the Sustainability Appraisal and the supporting documents.

Implications

25	Financial	The cost of preparing the AAP to adoption will require budgetary provision by each Council.
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Legal	As set out in the main body of the report
Staffing	The continued involvement of staff from both Councils is required to progress the AAP.
Risk Management	There are no direct implications
Equal Opportunities	There are no direct implications

Consultations

22. The North West Cambridge Area Action Plan Submission Draft builds upon continuing joint working with Cambridge City Council and extensive public participation and consultation with key stakeholders. There has also been a continuing dialogue with the University as the landowner and developer of the site.

Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

23. Taking the AAP forward will have a significant effect on all the Council's annual priorities and corporate objectives, especially growth areas and sustainability.

Conclusions

24. This report presents the responses to representations on the Preferred Options Report and the Submission Draft AAP. The North West Cambridge AAP is intended to enable the future growth of Cambridge University over the long term which is an objective of local, regional and national importance, and within this context, to maintain and enhance the quality of the setting of Cambridge which is a key purpose of the Cambridge Green Belt. The quality and amenity of the resulting development is accorded a high priority in the AAP, as is the achievement of a sustainable community, which will minimise its impact upon climate change. The Submission Draft AAP has therefore taken account of national, regional and local planning policy, previous consultation, local circumstance and the available evidence base.

Recommendations

25. Council is recommended to agree:
- 1) The responses to representations received on the Preferred Options Report (attached as appendix 1).
 - 2) The Submission Draft Area Action Plan (attached as appendix 4).
 - 3) The supporting documentation for the Submission Draft Area Action Plan (listed at paragraph 5.2).
 - 4) That the Growth and Sustainable Communities Portfolio Holder be authorised to agree minor editing changes, in consultation with Cambridge City Council's Executive Member.
 - 5) That any material changes to the plan arising from Cambridge City Council's consideration of the plan at its Environment Scrutiny Committee on 8 April 2008 be referred to the Council meeting on 24 April 2008 for further consideration.

Background Papers:

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- The Panel's report for the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Structure Plan
- Cambridge Local Plan 2006
- Cambridge Local Plan Inspector's Report 2006
- North West Cambridge Landscape Study 2006
- North West Cambridge Transport Study 2007
- Inner Green Belt Boundary Study, Cambridge City Council, 2002
- North West Cambridge AAP, Issues and Options report September 2006
- North West Cambridge AAP Preferred Options Report October 2007.

Contact Officer:

Caroline Hunt – Principal Planning Policy Officer

Telephone: (01954) 713196

e-mail: caroline.hunt@scambs.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1: Representations & Responses to the Preferred Options Report.

Appendix 2: Representations & Responses to the Sustainability Appraisal.

Appendix 3: Schedule of Proposed Changes to the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan.

Appendix 4: Track Changes Version of the Submission Draft Area Action Plan.

Appendix 5: North West Cambridge Site Footprint Assessment – Supplementary Paper.

Appendix 6: North West Cambridge Area Action Plan – Land Budget Paper.

Appendix 7: Climate Change & Sustainable Design & Construction Paper

Appendix 8: Non-Technical Summary of the North West Cambridge Area Action Plan Sustainability Appraisal – Full copy provided on website.

Appendix 9: Habitats Regulation Assessment (Screening Assessment).

Appendix 10: Statement of Consultation and Self Assessment of Soundness.